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ABSTRACT

Many schools of education do not specifically direct attention to programs that encourage, train and prepare teachers for life in rural schools and communities. Also the professors who concentrate most of their time in the city complex have had little exposure to rural needs and experiences. However, with some leadership on the part of rural residents, it is feasible to establish a visable working relationship with colleges of education and their students that will improve rural education. At Brigham Young University (BYU) rural teaching centers have been established, with close support of the rural school districts and regional service agencies. Students receive all or part of their professional training at these centers which are located over 100 miles from campus. Another program at BYU that is very popular with rural school districts is the teacher exchange and workshops program. This program involves removing the regular school teachers and administrators for anywhere from two days to a week and replacing them with student teachers. This program gives schools time for inservice during the year, gives student teachers a meaningful and unique in-school teaching experience, and gives parents and students a healthy "shot in the arm" about education at both the local school and university level. Another example of university/school district cooperation is the "Creative Fair" program in which student teachers prepare and present topics chosen by the teachers to the students. (NQ)

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Rurally Responsive Teacher Training:

Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind

by

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A talk given to the Iowa, People United for Rural Education (P.U.R.E.) Conference Feb 2-3, 1978
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RURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHER TRAINING

"Close Encounters of The Fourth Kind"

It is indeed a pleasure for me to participate with you in your First Annual State Convention for Rural Education. I have been impressed with your enthusiasm, awareness of the needs of rural education and desire to improve education for all youth.

A few months ago I was in the beautiful state of Oregon and commented at the Oregon Small Schools Summer Institute how pleased I was to be in a state homesteaded in 1857 by my great grandfather. This is my first trip to Iowa and I am equally thrilled because my mother was born in Des Moines and many relatives of the past have resided in Adel and the Dallas County area. Being an ardent genealogist, I consider any state in which my ancestors have lived a very special place.

I choose to use as a focal point for the next few minutes a title from a current popular movie "Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind." If you feel that I have misquoted the title you are correct, but I will explain shortly as I set the stage with a few media dramatics. The objectives on the slides that you ~~are~~ were watching are not from outer space. They represent universities of learning which exist in every state of the union. Why do I choose to categorize them as UFO's? Probably because they tend to be not so often seen by rural people. Certainly, many of us have gone to school at colleges or universities, but how frequent do university personnel come to us? The sightings are rare. When they do visit the experience is so shocking that we have a difficult time clearly telling others what we have seen.

It is not strange that of the over ~~1000~~ 3 or 4 hundred larger institutions of higher education in our country, the bulk are located in urban areas and generally relate closely to the problems and circumstances that occur in the cities. Now, some of you might remark, "That's good for us! What practical help can

possibly come from those hallowed halls with their ivy-draped faculty members?" Well, I am present to set your mind at rest. Some remarkably good things come from university faculties. Now, I will admit that some faculty groups can get a little too staid. I heard about a problem in a College of Education faculty meeting recently. Someone apparently had a coronary attack, and they gave mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to five men before they found the victim.

I do have the opportunity to read much from the scholarly journals and this has increased my insight into many problems. For example, I read of a compelling lecture by a university medical doctor dealing with the topic "Whither Prevention?" Needless to say, I was somewhat taken back by the article. As you know, there has been a recent outbreak of the whithers in the country. A lot of it has been goin' around in Utah and Texas too. I don't think that any of us can do enough to prevent the whithers around here.

In one paper from a university there was listed a meeting of the College Medical Consortium and a broad invitation to bring to the meeting one's favorite dates in the Middle Ages. Favorite dates in the Middle Ages? I wasn't quite sure what they wanted. I had gone out with a girl once who looked like she had been born about 1125 a.d. Apparently, they were more interested in the really big dates. On my list I immediately put down King Arthur's first date with Guinevere, followed quickly -- a little too quickly -- by Lancelot's first date with Guinevere. Then if you have seen the latest of Robin Hood. I think that his last date with Lady Marion was a sobering experience, especially her hot toddie with the hemlock for chaser. There must be an exciting array of good dates in the Middle Ages.

This next news release for those of the academic setting was a Geophysics Colloquium discussing the "Faunal Dynamics of the Great American Interchange." This topic strikes right at home to all those from this area. I bet that many of you would vote for the one ~~in downtown Des Moines~~ on Merle Hay Road + Hickman as one of the great American Interchanges. I understand that not withstanding the faunal dynamics, that the traffic is horendous.

Well, as a concluding item, Barry Blockhearst the II from the Department of Biology gave a tintlating genetics lecture on the "Sexual Antics of the Australian Wood Mouse: A Preliminary Report." I don't know about you, but I don't think that I would be too interested in much more than a preliminary report on that subject.

Now that you are firmly convinced that your previous opinion of the value of the university to rural education has been well documented, I will attempt to provide a more positive picture. It is possible to have successful encounters of the fourth kind with university departments and college of education. By the "fourth kind", I mean more than sightings and occasional irrelevant conversation. With some leadership on your part it is feasable to establish a visable working relationship with colleges of education and their students that will improve rural education.

Leadership on your part is essential because many schools of education do not specifically direct attention to programs that encourage, train and prepare teachers for life in rural schools and communities. Following suit, the professors who concentrate most of their time in the city complex have had little exposure to rural needs and experiences. A recent survey of university course offerings indicated that no more than six universities in the nation offered courses that might be of any prospective values for rural teachers. In a study conducted by myself and other educators in the R/REA, we surveyed over 200 universities about training programs in rural

schools and received basically these kinds of comments from college deans.

1. I see no need for our institution to have such a program.
2. I would not support any such movement on my own campus.
3. Rural programs should be limited to a few institutions.
4. I doubt that we could justify a special program.

Few of the institutions surveyed offered courses or workshops specifically for pre-service or inservice rural oriented educators. It concerns me a great deal as a university professor to endorse individualization of instruction and meeting the needs of all youth and then observe the profession training teachers as if they were a herd of Australian wood mice all doing the same thing. Teaching areas are vastly different and pose many unique problems and circumstances. Unfortunately, many colleges of education prepare new teachers to teach primarily in urban schools and offer graduate courses and workshops that tend to focus on problems of metropolitan areas.

~~It is time to forget (reluctance) in our endeavors to demand more effort from univ. in the part of~~ (citizens) ~~rural~~ education

What can you do to counter these conditions and get the kind of support that you need? The problem is not an easy one because colleges of education appear to be reluctant to change. I am reminded of the story of the young man who entering a new town for the first time in the heat of summer sought a cool drink. He found everything closed except one bar doing a lively business. Upon entering the establishment, he noted all seats were taken save one and that was a stool at the bar. As he seated himself and ordered his drink he paused to look around. The companion to his left was a monster of a man--at least 6'6" and weighing about 200 pounds. Overshadowed by such a huge person, he turned to his drink and was determined not to create a disturbance. Suddenly the big man turned to him and without a word, knocked him from the stool, by a blow to the neck. As the little fellow stood up the big man said, "That was karate from Korea!" The little fellow muttered

thanks and took his seat again. About 10 minutes later the same thing happened. As the little fellow stood up the large man said, "That was jujitzu from Japan." By now the little fellow was feeling slightly uncomfortable. He had a terrible pain running through his body. Ten minutes later the action repeated itself. This time the big brute said that his last demonstration was Kung Fu from China. The poor little fellow staggered from the bar. He returned a few minutes later, walked up to the big man, tapped him on the shoulder, and with one blow, knocked him clear across the room. The man toppled over unconscious to the floor. In astonishment everyone in the room turned and stared wide-eyed at the scene. The little fellow looked over at the bartender and said, "When he comes to, tell him that was a crowbar from SEARS."

The point to this story is vague, however, it is possible to suggest the thought that there is a way to accomplish the most difficult of tasks successfully.

The easiest way to begin is to ask for support and that kind of request usually has a desirable effect upon any college. At BYU a group of rural superintendents met with the Dean of the College of Education for an hour and a half to air their feelings about many subjects. Needless to say, most deans will respond to this type of friendly gathering. Ours did!

One of the really valuable things that has been done at BYU with the close support of the rural school districts and regional service agencies, was the establishment of rural teaching centers. We have had for the past six years, two centers operating--each located over 100 miles from campus. Approximately 250-300 students have received all or part of their professional training at these centers. Our student teachers live in the area assigned and spend from 8-16 weeks teaching in their major and minor. The program has been highly beneficial for both school and university. A few things

that we have learned are:

1. Rural schools are willing to financially support this type of program.

2. School districts are vocal in support of this program. We cannot staff enough areas.

3. Rural teachers are willing to take upon themselves much responsibility for training the student teachers.

4. Our student teachers are treated more like rural teachers than student teachers.

5. Our students get more heavily involved in school and community life than urban student teachers.

6. Over 90% of our students who go to rural areas to student teach want to take a first job in a rural school district.

7. Rural school administrators find recruitment much easier and end up hiring teachers with known qualities.

8. Rural schools are much more flexible in altering progress to meet the needs of student teachers.

Some interesting happenings have occured with this rural program.

One young man indicated "I have learned two things from this experience. One, I don't want to teach in a rural school, and two, I don't want to teach period!" His decision was a wise one. He just didn't have the temperment to work with teenage kids. At least he was able to make this decision before entering the teaching ranks rather than after.

One young lady didn't show up at the place that she was to stay at the time scheduled. She was driving to the town from Provo, Utah. When she didn't arrive, the family alerted the school, police, highway patrol, university, and finally got in contact with me as I was working at a school in another part of the State. The young lady had decided to have her car tuned up and not travel until the next day. She learned her lesson--always call and let people know if you are going to be delayed.

At one location our students were working with retarded children.

One of our student teachers took his charge (an 18 year old well endowed young lady, with moderate brain damage), to the local downtown five and ten cent variety store, as a prize for hard academic work. She was given a quarter to spend and decided that she wanted one of the toy diamond rings on display. When our not too bright 24 year old student finally realized what her intentions were, he tried to talk her out of the ring in favor of a color book. She flatly and firmly replied, "No, I want a diamond ring so that we can be engaged."

About this time I drove up to the school following a meeting at the superintendent's office and asked the students where Tom and the young lady were. They reported that he was still at the store in town. Realizing that the mother of the girl would be arriving in 20 minutes to pick her up, I hurriedly sent two of the fellows in their red sports car to get her back. When they arrived on main street and pulled up in front of the store, Tom was just coaxing the girl out of the store. She was very balky at this point and wouldn't budge another inch until she got her diamond ring. The two boys leaped from the car, grabbed her by the arms, and pulled her into the back seat of their vehicle. They drove back to the school and had just unloaded her when her mother arrived. Unfortunately, a barber across the street from the store had seen the sports car pull up and witnessed the three strange men abducting the girl. He called the police, who called the parents. In the meanwhile, we had said goodby to everyone and were heading back to the university. We missed the police who were

becoming very concerned until the mother arrived at home and put everyone at ease.

One of the problems that we have had at the university in operating this program is talking the academic supervisor into supervising student teachers at such a distance. They often feel it is easier for them to assign and supervise student teachers locally. As a means of overcoming this problem, the money regularly paid the school's cooperating teacher is paid to the college supervisor. In addition, the school district also pays an additional $28 per student teacher and $40 if the supervising teacher conducts an evening seminar with the student teachers. Thus a college supervisor can receive the university stipend of $72 plus $28 from the school district for a total of $100 for each student sent to a rural district.

Another program at Brigham Young University that is very popular with rural school districts is the teacher exchange and workshops program. The purpose behind this activity is to:

- give school districts or a school some meaningful time for inservice during the school year
- give student teachers a meaningful and unique in-school teaching experience
- give parents and students a healthy "shot in the arm" about education at both the local school and university level

Thus far, we have worked with 10 school districts representing 21 separate schools in this manner. The venture involves removing the regular school teachers and administrators for anywhere from two days

to a week and replacing them for this period of time by student teachers.

Crucial to the success of the program is the involvement of the school staff in planning the activities. Obviously, some of the fearful will be reluctant to leave the classroom but generally the thought of a few days away from school in a staff-planned workshop is appealing. We plan with the administration and faculty prior to the time the exchange is to take place. The faculty decides what it is that they need the most of in terms of inservice help. We take the school schedule and plug our student teachers into that schedule. The school with the help of parents finds places for our student to stay. The parents have been very positive about this aspect of the program.

The faculty workshops have been handled in a number of ways. Workshops can be conducted totally by the school district, or can be taught by university personnel. In some instances, or some combination of the two (school and university) can be employed. The workshops may also be held somewhere in the school district or at the university. In no instance have we found fewer than 90% of any school group indicating less than a "good" to "excellent" rating on the value and overall benefits of the program. Ninety-five percent of all faculties have felt that the experience caused them to draw together in closer bonds of cooperation.

Yet another example of school district/university cooperation is the "Creative Fair" program. This program is conducted generally

by an individual university academic department. Home economics and social sciences have been the most often used. The university schedules with a rural school district a "Creative Fair." The history, home economics departments or elementary school grade level teachers meet with us at the school and decide what classes or grades that they would like to have particpate and if they want a one or two day program. We provide a list of topics that our students can handle and the teachers select the topics that they would like presented to their students.

The student teacher topics are well prepared and generally take up the entire class period. The presentations are given in the participating teachers classroom each period or often especially in the elementary and junior high school, the cafeteria is used. In the latter instance, 10 or 12 topics may be presented at the same time (approximately 15 minutes in length) with students free to go places of their choice. Typical topics for presentation have been: grooming, outdoor cooking, preparing quickie foods, story telling, oragamie, the Constitution, Indians, the frontier, macrame, geography, etc.

Our students spend the night sleeping in the school so there is no cost to the school district except for some materials used by the public school students.

For graduate study at the doctoral level, most universitites require the school administrator or teacher to spend two consecutive semesters on campus to meet the residency requirement. This often

creates a difficult problem for the educator who lives in a rural area and must move to the city if he or she is to go to school. At Brigham Young University we have a fully accredited Intern Doctoral Program that permits students to establish residency during two eight week summer sessions. Also 14 hours of course work in the form of a school improvement project is completed at the doctoral students work location. The dissertation is also a practical one and the student is encouraged to keep his study geared to his area of work. A number of rural educators are in this program each year.

The above are just a few of the ways that teacher training institutions can become supportive of rural school efforts. There are many other ways and at Brigham Young University we need to do more. Fortunately, we are in the process in the State of Utah of organizing a rural school association composed of educators at all levels. I am sure that we at the university level will receive much from this association in terms of getting busy for rural education.

The People United for Rural Education, with its fine leadership and dedication to sound principles of education is in a position to help universities become more rurally responsible. I hope that will be one of your major tasks. God bless you in all your endeavors and thank you for this opportunity to be with you in your first convention.